



**Maj. Kurt Preston is pictured above in Hungary. Preston joined the United States Delegation in the fall of 1996 as a technical expert during the U.S. Department of Defense consultations with the Hungarian Ministry of Defense. As Europe District's Technical Coordinator for Environmental Remediation, Preston is currently collocated with the U.S. Army, Europe's Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Engineer. (Photo by Emery Lizar).**

## **Preston receives Environmental Engineer of the Year award**

**By Marnah Woken**

**Europe District Public Affairs**

As the principal Environmental Engineer for Operation Joint Endeavor, Maj. Kurt Preston has received the Federal Environmental Engineer of the Year award.

Preston, who is Europe District's Technical Coordinator for Environmental Remediation, is collocated with United States Army, Europe (USAREUR), Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Engineer (DCSENGR) in Heidelberg, where he is an assistant and advisor on the technical aspects of environmental issues throughout USAREUR. While often asked to comment on a multitude of environmental issues to include the environmental aspects of contingency operations, his primary focus is restoration — he validates all army restoration projects in Europe for technical quality.

As a reservist with the 412th Engineer Command (ENCOM), Preston deployed to Hungary in support of Operation Joint Endeavor in May 1996 as the principle point of contact for environmental issues to deployed forces.

"As the largest military operation on the European Continent in 50 years, it was incumbent on United States military forces to display an exceptional regard for the environment," said Garry Zettersten, Chief of Environmental Division at Headquarters USAREUR DCSSENGR. "As a result, environmental issues were

critically important and the operation possessed an enormous environmental focus.”

“Major Preston provided a critical link between environmental stewardship and mission accomplishment while stationed in Taszar, Hungary,” added Zettersten. “With extensive military and environmental experience, he provided the senior field commander an immediate, expert source for timely, relevant, and accurate environmental engineering information. Additionally, his leadership and executive ability provided the U.S. Army’s environmental program unparalleled stability and direction throughout the four nation area of operations.”

There are four constant components to the environmental program, according to Preston. They include hazardous waste disposal, environmental assessment of all sites, spill response, and spill site remediation.”

“The biggest challenge was the ongoing coordination of the movement of hazardous waste and contaminated materials across international borders,” said Preston. “A lot of people were involved in the issue and we met the challenge.”

“From a Corps perspective, we were heavily involved in spill response, particularly in Hungary,” he added. “What could have been major problems were stopped due to a quick response by the Corps.”

“The environment is a major issue in Eastern European countries and people are now able to express their concerns,” said Preston. “In the States, if you don’t want a landfill in your backyard you go to the city council and voice your opinion. People in Eastern Europe were not able to do that until now.”

“I can’t think of anyone across the spectrum of support personnel who deserves this award more,” said Zettersten. “At the same time, the award represents the efforts of a host of Corps of Engineers employees who support the total effort — Environmental Engineer Henry Becker, Ansbach Environmental Branch Chief Mary Schommer, Planning and Environmental Project Manager Johnny Martinez, Planning and Environmental Branch Chief Debra Dale, Project Manager Randy Holman, and Maj. Tim Touchette, former Planning and Environmental Project Manager.

“One thing that made issues much easier was the work of Maj. Tim Touchette,” added Preston. “I feel great about the award. It’s a great honor. It really is a form of recognition for all of the work the soldiers did downrange. It also represents the great work of the two organizations that deployed me — USAREUR DCSSENGR and Europe District.”



**(From left to right) Maj. Tim Touchette, former Europe District Planning and Environmental Project Manager, Per-Ivar Pedersen, a Capt. in the Norwegian Army, and Maj. Kurt Preston, stand in front of a Norwegian Base Camp in November 1996 in support of Operation Joint Endeavor.**